

Dear Fellow Employee:

March is National Nutrition Month

Nutrition blah... blah... blah... exercise blah... blah... blah... healthy lifestyle blah... blah... blah... Is that what you read or hear these days whenever you pick up a magazine or newspaper or turn on the news on radio or TV? We're the second fattest state, Detroit's the fattest city, we're couch potatoes raising tater tots. With so much information overload, it's easy to tune out the message and allow it to drift off to that section of your brain reserved for all the other unsolvable problems of the world.

Actually though, this is one of the things you can take control of. What you put in your mouth is definitely up to you. You have choices here!! You can choose a Big Mac at 493 calories and a large fry at 412 calories and wash it down with a medium chocolate shake at 423 calories. You can do the math on this one: it adds up to too much! On a 2000 calorie diet (that's what the nutrition labels are based on), you've used up two-thirds of your calories for the day and all of your fat grams. And you've scored a big zero in the fruits and vegetables and fiber department. (If you had the lettuce, tomatoes, pickles, and onions, we'll give you a little here.) It wouldn't take too many days of this type of meal to leave a roll around your middle and your energy level on the floor. As with your computer, garbage in equals garbage out.

You can make better choices. You don't have to give up fast food: choose the regular burger at 279 calories, skip the fries and have a side salad with low fat dressing and drink water or, if you must, diet soda. Opt for chili, or a plain baked potato and put chili on it. We're talking fiber here, folks, and vegetables. If you eat better, you will feel better and have more energy. That's not just an empty promise, it's the truth.

There's lots of hype now about low carb diets, but there can be pitfalls. Healthy diets are made up of three components: protein, fat, and carbohydrates. Any diet that asks you to totally exclude one of these components may not be a diet you can live with long-term. Our bodies need these nutrients to function optimally. It's when these groups are out of balance that we begin to have weight problems. Choose whole grain, unprocessed, low sugar carbs that are high in fiber. Don't go the way of the nofat/lofat craze either. It removed fat from our foods and replaced it with processed carbohydrates that totally tipped the balance in our diets. Check with your physician concerning a diet plan that may be a good choice for you.

Choose to be moderate in your food intake. Don't deprive yourself of all the foods you love, but learn to recognize when you have had enough. Eat when you are hungry and stop before you are full. Ask yourself if what you're eating is what your body needs. Set an example for your kids: make meal times family times and don't make food the issue. Small children know whether they are hungry or not and we should not train them to ignore this by forcing them to eat. (Be sure to have healthy foods for them when they are hungry.)

There are no easy answers to weight control and no miraculous one-size-fits-all diets, in spite of what the weight loss industry would have you believe. It's all about balance, moderation, and being in tune to what your body needs. There's a strong, healthy person inside all of us: we just have to help him/her step up.

Check the Employee Health & Wellness website for:

1. Fitness & nutrition articles
2. Pedometer & Fitness Club discounts
3. What's Up In Your Area (health-related resources in your county)
4. Wellness programs offered by your insurance company

WOW website:

www.michigan.gov/mdcs/0,1607,7-147-22854_24290---,00.html

If you are unable to access the website from the above link, go to www.michigan.gov and click on State Web Sites. Click on MDCS, Employee Benefits, then Employee Health and Wellness.

Lana Ashley, with MDCH in Lansing, is February's Wow Contest Winner. She will receive a "Mid-MI On The Move" t-shirt. Lana, Congratulations! "You Go Girl!"

If you are unable to access our website from work or from home, please feel free to call us to obtain information on any of the above. We are also available for one-on-one coaching on fitness and nutrition issues.

Employee Health & Wellness

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